

## SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND THE JOYFUL EXPERIENCES OF THE STUDENTS

*Preliminary communication*

**Elena Dzhambazova**

*Sofia University „Saint Kliment Ohridski”  
Faculty of Preschool and Primary School Education, Sofia, Bulgaria*

### Abstract

*The report presents data from a study of 300 students from classes I to VIII, who has a task to describe the joyful situations experienced during the school training. A picture of one of the criteria for data processing was illustrated in terms of subjects to which the children reported that they experienced positive emotions. A picture of the most popular means of physical education was also shown. The students from first to eighth grade feel emotionally best in lessons with game character. There is no interest in the mandatory program in athletics and gymnastics. Greatest joy of learning share the students from the capital city. In the period the external evaluation of fourth grade is performed, evaluation of students on the subject of physical education and sport also to be done.*

**Keywords:** *education and sport, school curriculum, questionnaire, school overall learning process, football, cycling, swimming, joyful studying*

### INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of the international project "Joy of learning" (with participants from Bulgaria, Germany, Spain, Poland, Romania, USA and Japan) in which the research is aimed at highlighting joyful and happy situations at learning from the perspective of students, the emphasis in this report is on the subject of physical education and sport.

The established trend in school physical education globally consists in extracting the pleasure of movement, preservation of psychophysical comfort of students and demand for overall health effect.

Considering the school overall learning process the aim is to study to what extent physical education and sport evoke joyful emotions in students from first to eighth grade and by what means.

### METHODS

The information was collected, by asking the students to write a text about Dr. Ivanov, and to describe the most joyful moment during the learning process in school.

The teacher asked the students to describe in detail their feelings and thoughts related to a narrated or experienced situation: "What exactly happened?", "How did you feel? " "What do you remember?", "What were you thinking at this point ?" etc. It was emphasized that the text should be associated with learning in school. If the students wish, they can draw a picture, which to add to the letter to Dr. Ivanov.

Table 1. shows 300 students from Bulgaria represented in number, grade and type of village. The settlements are: the village of Bregovo, the towns Burgas, Vidin and Ispirich, Sofia city and the villages Gramada, Drenovets and Novo selo.

After gathering information from the students, the data is processed according to pre-established criteria and sub-criteria. One of the sub-criteria is approach

related to subjects that allow tracking the work on which subjects evokes the greatest joy.

*Table 1. Number of respondents according to the classes and settlements*

Grade	The Capital city	Big town	Small town	Village	Total
1-2	28	21	26	13	88
3-4	0	33	19	19	71
5-6	23	16	25	10	74
7-8	13	16	28	10	67
Total	64	86	98	52	300

### RESULTS

Table 2. presents the results in percents by classes and subjects. It must be stipulated that for the purposes of basic research the joyful experiences in Bulgarian language have been distinguished apart from those in reading and literature, which in the curriculum represent one subject, but separate time and topics have been provided for them in the school program. Moreover, it was found that 174 students from 300 expressed a position on a particular subject and only those students have described their joyful emotions on a particular subject. Others have presented their experiences related to approaches to learning, learning environment, teacher, facilities, methods and other joint activities in which the subject itself is not the leading topic. The children have expressed satisfaction with the academic atmosphere, of expression over others, gaming practices, competitions, success, coping with tasks, collaboration with classmates, etc., without having any matter which was

Table 2. Ranking of interest in school subjects

№	Subject	Number of students	% of all students	% of all students from I-II grade	% of all students from III-V grade	% of all students from V-VI grade	% of all students from V-VIII grade
1	Man and nature Human's body	34	11,3%	2,3%	33,8%	5,4%	5,9%
2	Physical education and sport	28	9,3%	10,2%	7%	5,4%	15%
3	Mathematics	22	7,3%	13,6%	8,4%	8,1%	1,5%
4	Bulgarian language	19	6,3%	10,2%	8,5%	4%	1,6%
5-6	Man and society, History, Geography	18	6%	0%	15,5%	0%	10,4%
5-6	Reading, literature	18	6%	5,7%	9,9%	8,1%	0%
7-8	Fine art and painting	9	3%	1,1%	4,2%	1,3%	5,9%
7-8	Design, lifestyle and technology, craft	9	3%	4,5%	4,2%	0%	2,9%
9	Foreign language	7	2,3%	3,4%	1,4%	2,7%	1,5%

the subject. The number reflected in the table is only 174 persons who have indicated situations related to a specific subject, but the percent is out of all tested. Therefore, the sum of the percent is not 100% and the sum of the number of students is not 300.

The table shows that the largest number of students 34 (11 %) experience positive emotions of the subjects which can generally be summarized as "science" and teach about animals, plants, natural phenomena and events and the structure of human body. Second of all respondents with 9% ranks the subject of physical education and sport. But if the percent in Bulgarian language and literature is summed, then physical education and sport rank third. At first glance the third place for a subject, originally scheduled for positive experiences of students, was not expected. The students have to describe a situation during the learning. It is possible the children not to consider as learning the things they do in physical education and sport. Comparing the results with those from a large study of Nikolova, Staevska, Lyutibrodskia, & Staycheva (Николова, Стаевска, Лютибродска, & Стайчева) (1995), with 2232 students in which 88% of them like the lessons in physical education, 9% look negligible. To these students the question was directly set "Are you attracted by lessons in physical education?", while in the present study the students has to share in the written when they have experienced joy of learning in school. Most joyful experiences related to physical education share the students from VII and VIII class, although compared to other ages, the number of surveyed is the lowest. 11 students from this group who share joyful experiences in physical education and sport are from a private school in Sofia. Most satisfied with this subject are the students from Sofia. Of all 28 (of all ages) replied to, 16 are from Sofia. It is a private school and indirectly this means that the teacher in physical education and sport makes the learning of this subject desired by the children. And not a single student of all ages from the village did not share that he enjoys the means and methods of physical education. It can be assumed, that these children have more locomotor activity in leisure time, more space to play and that their need for physical

activity is satisfied out of school or the teacher does not work well.

Besides what percent of students have pleasant experiences in teaching physical education, also important is the question what exactly causes the positive emotions. The chart shows that equal numbers of surveyed subjects like football and the game in general, without specifying what kind of game: sports, relay or mobile. For them it is important to play interesting games. Three of the stories of the 8-year-olds mention the word "interesting" two or three times. In addition they say the teacher is the person who makes these games interesting. One of the children said: "Because the teacher is good with me and we play interesting things. He shows us interesting sports things." About the relationship of interest and training in the general educational plan, Plakrouz (Плакроуз) (1992), says: "it is difficult to teach effectively in the absence of pleasure or when it is boring and uninteresting. The less there is fun, the less indefinite is our training. The child who does not like to go to school, and is unhappy and depressed from the school life will hardly enjoy great success". Author Grigорова (Григорова) (1991), as a specialist in physical education, notes the positive impact of interest on student's achievements and highlights its importance for the overall development of children. Having in mind the age of the surveyed and the established by many educators, psychologists and methodists (Кларед (Клапаред), 1941; Lyublinskaya (Люблинская), 1984; Пуйн, (Ильин), 1987); Vassileva (Василева), 2002), the positive impact of the game for child's development, the results are not surprising. As expected, most of the students who like football were boys, but there was also one girl.

Table 3. Number of students according to interest in physical exercise

Physicalexercise	Number of surveyed
Like to play in general	7
Football	7
Cycling	5
Swimming	4
Spots classes	2
Others	10

She is 10 years old and describes as follows: "I am a girl who loves to play football. I love to compete". Apparently recognizing that this is not common for girls, she specifies she is a girl, although her name is written in the form. In practice, the number of the students that like games and football are half of those who have expressed the attitude to the subject of physical education and sport. Nikolova, Staevska, Lyutibrodskia, & Staycheva (Николова, Стаевска, Лютибродска, & Стайчева), (1995) found through survey and stated that 27% (the highest percentage) of students' preferences to the subject were based on the interest in games.

It is surprising that no student has not specified other sports besides the football game, while in the curriculum the games like basketball, handball and volleyball are subjects of the mandatory core material in "Sports Games".

Cycling is the next sport that provokes joyful experience. This sport does not present the program in physical education and sport and is not part of the school teaching process. But the thrill of learning the motor habit of cycling has found a place in the descriptions of the students. Maxim, who is 13 writes: "I felt happy when I learned to ride a bike. Even if I made mistakes nobody would write me a bad score." Two other children marked: "Dad was proud of me" and "Dad helped me to learn." Alex was bothered when the teacher listed him to participate in a bike race, but finished third at his first race and was glad of it. All these shares show that the joy of learning is associated with success, evaluation, praise and rewards. In this connection Dimitrova (Димитрова), (1995) wrote: "The methods of stimulation and encouragement have an extremely important role in the formation of educational relationships between the teachers and the students and enhance the effectiveness of the educational process. All children feel the need to be commended, to gain recognition of their individual achievements in different types of activities. But do the expectations of others affect the experiences of children? According Kyuchukova (Кючукова) (2002) "Too often over-expectations of adults (teachers and parents) for the success of the child place him in a dependent position. Thus these violates the balance between the motivation, initiative and ability to experience positive emotions of success. Exaggerating the role of success in academic activities is the most common cause for the generation of these excessive expectations mentioned in the pedagogical and psychological literature.

Next, as a source of positive emotions is the swimming. Swimming is optional in the current curriculum. It is known that very few schools in the country have swimming pools. It is therefore understandable that only one student from a small town indicated swimming as a desired sport. The remaining students are from a private school. It is known that such schools have more and modern sports facilities. Perhaps it's predetermined outcome. Ten different occasions for joyful emotions were mentioned by only one student. They range from more exotic sports and activities, nothing to do with school program (kite surfing, inline skates, majorettes) to the more usual:

team competitions, new games, first place (without specifying what), competitions (all kind).

Not one student has described the experience of pleasant emotions associated with athletics and gymnastics. Adding to this lack of interest in other sports games (except football), it appears that the mandatory teaching material in physical education can not cause pleasant experiences for students. A similar trend was noted long ago by Radulov (Радулов), (1983); Grigорова (Григорова), (1991). They explain some reasons and suggest ways to change this. Generally their proposals boil down to more creativity from the teachers and use of gaming techniques in gymnastics lessons. Despite the lack of interest in gymnastics, in a survey among 600 teachers (Андонов, Илиева, & Борисова) (Andonov, Ilieva, & Borisova) (2003) they unanimously said that "It is impossible without basic gymnastics as a fundamental discipline ". It is necessary to ensure that those classes become attractive. As for athletics, which clearly is a competitive element, the lack of interest and pleasant experiences of the students is not obvious. If for some types of jumps the poor state of facilities in most schools can be the reason, for running and throws it can not be. It can be assumed that part of the material is not taught at all. Usually in the public space primarily the teachers are accused that in physical education classes with students they solve problems in mathematics or make dictations. If this is the reason part of the material in elementary school not to be mastered or the skills of the teachers are not enough to teach interesting, memorable and causing pleasant emotions for younger students, what should be said about those teachers who teach from fifth to eighth grade and are specialists only in physical education and sport. It is not normal none of the surveyed students not to mention the experienced positive emotions from the majority of studied material.

The total number of the students who have expressed different preferences is more than 28 because there are students that has chosen more than one sport.

#### CONCLUSIONS

1. Students from first to eighth grade feel emotionally best in lessons with game character.
2. There is no interest in the mandatory program in athletics and gymnastics.
3. Greatest joy of learning share the students from the capital city.

#### Suggestions:

1. In the period the external evaluation of fourth grade is performed, evaluation of students on the subject of physical education and sport also to be done. And so the teachers will be more involved to work on mastering the skills provided in the curriculum.
2. The documents defining the criteria for ranking in the race for the prize "Teacher of the Year" to include primarily those for skills in working in class.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The study was conducted with courtesy and was financed by Fund Research at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for 2016., Contract № 212.

## REFERENCES

- Андонов, К., Илиева, Ст., & Борисова, Т. (2003). Анализ на резултати от анкетно проучване на учителите по физическо възпитание и спорт [Analysis of the results of a survey of teachers in physical education and sport. In Bulgarian.] *Спорт и наука*, 46(3), 72-79.
- Василева, Р. (2002). *Защо да обучаваме играейки* [Why teach playing. In Bulgarian.] Велико Търново: Издателство Фабер.
- Григорова, В. (1991). Нашият опит за развитие на интереса на осемгодишни ученици към гимнастическите упражнения [Our experience in provoking the interest of the 8 years old students in gymnastics. In Bulgarian.] *Въпроси на физическата култура*, 36(10), 27-31.
- Димитрова, Г. (1995). Емоционално-позитивното отношение - условие за ефективност на възпитателното взаимодействие [Emotionally positive attitude condition for the effectiveness of the educational interaction. In Bulgarian.] *Педагогика*, (7), 48-60.
- Ильин, Е. П. (1987). *Психология физического развития. Психология на ученика* [Psychology of physical developments. Students Psychology. In Russian.] Москва: Просвещение.
- Клапаред, Ед. (1941). *Функционално образование* [Functional education. In Bulgarian.] София: Книгоиздателство Стоян Георгиев.
- Кючукова, Д. (2002). Влияние на възпитателните стилове върху емоционалния статус на учениците [Impact of educational styles on the emotional status of students.] *Начално училище*, 9(4), 40-47.
- Люблинская, А. (1984). *За психологията на ученика от начална училищна възраст* [The psychology of students from primary school age. In Bulgarian.] София: Издателство „Народна просвета“.
- Николова, Е., Стаевска, П., Лютибродска, Л., & Стайчева, В. (1995). Физическото възпитание през погледа на ученика [Physical education through the eyes of students. In Bulgarian.] *Спорт и наука*, 30(9), 41-43.
- Пенева, Б. (1994). Цел и задачи на училищното физическо възпитание [Goals and objectives of Physical Education at schools. In Bulgarian.] *Педагогика*, 4(5), 43-44.
- Плакроуз, Х. (1992). *Училището място за деца* [School - the place for children.] София: Издава Международен център за обучение и изследвания.
- Радулов, В. (1983). *100 упражнения в 100 варианта* [100 exercises in 100 variations. In Bulgarian.] София: Издателство Медицина и физкултура.

Correspondence:

Elena Dzhambazova

Sofia University „Saint Kliment Ohridski“

Faculty of Preschool and Primary School Education

69A Shipchenski Prohod Str. 1574 Sofia, Bulgaria

E-mail: edjambazova@gmail.com